



# The Circus Train

A Safety Lesson for Head Start and Early Childhood Programs

Subjects: Health and Safety, Math and Science

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**Safety Message: Stay BACK from tracks and trains!**

## OVERVIEW

This lesson can be used in a counting, circus, transportation or animal thematic unit.

## SPECIFICS

In presenting this lesson, children will be introduced to a basic safety rule if they are even in the position of being near railroad tracks or trains in their neighborhood, or any neighborhood. The basic safety message in this lesson is to stay back from tracks and trains.

**OBJECTIVES** The students will:

- count animals/train cars up to five.
- repeat The Circus Train poem.
- learn a basic safety rule of staying back from trains and tracks.

## MATERIALS

- Copy of [The Circus Train](#) poem
- Construction paper
- Markers/crayons
- Pictures of lions, elephants, bears, giraffes, clowns – or you can draw them

## DIRECTIONS

### TEACHER PREPARATION:

Become familiar with The Circus Train poem. Have the poem readily available, memorize it, or print it on a poster board, chart paper or chalkboard for added early reading experiences.

## ACTIVITY

1. Make five (5) train cars by folding pieces of construction paper in half, staple the sides together, leaving the top open making a pocket. Number the train cars, with a marker, 1-5
2. Draw, or have children draw, a train engine.
3. Secure the paper train to chart paper, chalkboard or bulletin board.
4. Add one lion to car 1, two elephants to car 2, three bears in car 3, four giraffes in car 4, and five clowns in car 5. These pictures/drawings can be attached to the outside of the car, or placed in the pocket of the train car.
5. Children can practice one-to-one correspondence skills by matching the number of the train car to the number of animals in the train car.
6. Read or say the poem while pointing to the train cars.
7. Repeat and encourage the children to help you repeat the rhyme when they become familiar with it.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How many lions are on the train? Elephants? Bears? Giraffes? Clowns?
2. Why do you need to stand far away from any train?
3. How many of you have seen a train?
4. Is a train big or small?

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR THE INSTRUCTOR

- Pedestrian Safety Information Around Tracks and Trains
- Bells are only one of the warning devices on a locomotive; horns also provide a louder audible warning.
- Railroad tracks, trestles, yards and equipment are private property and trespassers are subject to arrest and fines. Railroad property is private property.
- Cross tracks ONLY at designated pedestrian or roadway crossings.
- It can take a mile or more to stop a train, so a locomotive engineer who suddenly spots you ahead has little chance to miss you. For your safety, it is illegal to be there unless you are at a designated public crossing.
- Trains can overhang the tracks by at least three (3) feet on either side in both directions and loose straps hanging from rail cars may extend even further.
- The only safe place to cross is at designated public crossing with either a crossbuck, flashing red lights or gate. If you cross at any other place, you are trespassing and can be ticketed or fined.
- Do not cross the tracks immediately after a train passes. The view of a second train might be hidden by the first. Trains can come from either direction. Wait until you can see clearly in both directions.
- Flashing red lights signal that a train is approaching from either direction. You can be fined for failure to obey these signals. Never walk around lowered gates at a crossing. DO NOT cross the tracks until the lights have stopped flashing and it is safe to do so.
- Freight trains do not travel on a predictable schedule; schedules for passenger trains change also. Always expect a train at every highway-rail grade crossing at anytime from any direction.